

## Opening Comments

Covenant of Christ Conference, Egyptian Theater  
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I'm grateful for the opportunity to be here with you today. Preliminarily I should explain to those who are listening to this or participating in this for the first time, a little about this group. Everything that goes on is voluntary among us, no one is paid for any service that they provide. Tithes that are gathered among us are used for the poor. Therefore, we have no funds because the tithing money goes to assist the poor. The Boise Fellowships volunteered to conduct this conference, they are the ones who organized it, they are the ones who paid to rent the venues. Since we own no buildings and use tithes for the poor and we meet in homes, when we meet in a place like this it requires someone pay to rent the venue which the Boise Fellowships have done. They are also providing all of the web services for free to broadcast these proceedings. I want to give thanks to the Boise Fellowship and all of those who helped them and I want to thank them for the invitation to speak here today.

Before we get to the business of the meeting I want to try and give a context. Since we do not yet have formatted and available scriptures to use, for today's talk whenever I refer to a verse I am referring to a verse in the traditionally laid out Book of Mormon format with Jacob chapter 5 being the only chapter from which I refer to a verse. There are many verses quoted but if I give you a verse number that verse is in Jacob chapter 5.

Take courage! Life was meant to be a living sacrifice, to be lost in the service to God, only by losing your life will you find it. Saving faith is so rare precisely because it requires courage to engage the opposition in this world and to cheerfully ensure the abuse, lies, threats and fiery darts sent by those who fear your faith above everything. Faith in God will save you through his grace, it can render every weapon of this world and hell powerless, but it takes courage. When friends betray you and fear overtakes your associates and causes the knees to buckle under the weight of the burdens God allows to be imposed upon you. Remember the Lord descended below it all and when He cried out asking for the bitter cup to be removed, there was no relief. He is the prototype of the saved man and the father loved him for his sacrifice. It was the Lord's sacrifice for us that perfected his love for us. He values us because of the great price He paid for each one of us. If you love God you will be given the opportunity to prove your love. You will be proven by the things you endure for His name's sake. Do not fail. Melchizedek's people in the land of Salem were like this people they had waxed strong in iniquity and abominations, yeah, they had all gone astray, they were full of all manner of wickedness but Melchizedek having exercised mighty faith and received the office of the high priesthood according to the Holy Order of God did preach repentance unto to his people and behold they did repent.

The covenant being offered does not require one to reject it, only voluntary acceptance. It assumes mankind's rejection and therefore to reject one need do nothing. Entering into the

covenant offered by the Lord today does not mean there is a church or organization to be joined, it only means that you affirm that you will accept and abide the terms set by the Lord for being one of his people. You can be one of his covenant people and also hold membership in any church of your choosing.

However, the covenant imposes the responsibility to help others who also accept the covenant. To regard them also as the Lords, to honor God, seek to recover Israel, teach children to honor God, care for the poor among God's people and to help lighten the burdens of others. None of those responsibilities involve establishing or joining an institution. The words of the covenant require us to have left behind the destructive and vile practices of the world. It reads in part, all you who have turned from your wicked ways and repented of your evil doings of lying and deceiving and of all whoredoms and of secret abominations, idolatries, murders, priestcrafts and envying and strife and from all wickedness and abominations and have come unto me and been baptized in my name and received a remission of your sins and received the Holy Ghost are now numbered with my people who of the house of Israel. Those enumerated vile and destructive things must end among us today. We are all equal. We all accept the Book of Mormon as a covenant for us to be numbered among the Lord's covenant people. This land, in particular, is a land of promise to those who serve the God of this land who is Jesus Christ. The time is coming when those who are not the Lord's people will be swept off the land.

I have been given authority from God to deliver this covenant, this day. Every formality required from the days of Adam until now for establishing a covenant has been kept and met. Once the covenant is established, those sustained by seven women or a man inside his own family, who receive it, also have authority to administer the ordinance to others who want to be numbered among God's people. To administer to others, repeat the ordinance, read aloud the Lord's answer and the words of the covenant. Ask them to stand and say yes and they will become one of the Lord's covenant people. Do not change the words of the covenant, for to change an ordinance is to break it. All our ancestors have failed to follow the Lord's path. Generations now dead, anxiously wait for us to be faithful. They have part in this through you, if they have a righteous living descendent they are blessed vicariously through that relationship. We are all part of one family and your role in that family can bless the living and the dead.

I have been ashamed of us because of recent events. Subsequent to the Lord's answer we have continued to be quarrelsome, bickering and unkind to one another to such a degree, we certainly must offend the Lord. I thought God would be so disappointed with us that it was wrong to proceed and therefore I prayed to call this off. To my surprise, Lord did not expect us to do things right at first, He expects us to learn how to do things right. Failure is part of learning. Zion is something that has only been accomplished in the known history of the world by two communities. It's prophesied that there will be a third. What is to be created is something so foreign to this world, that there is nothing in the world to use to judge how we are doing. Even the scriptures do not give a blueprint to follow. If they contained the necessary information, Zion would've been established long ago. God alone will establish Zion; his instructions are vital and necessary for us. Once he instructs us, the

Scriptures can then be used to confirm that his directions to us now is consistent with what he prophesied, covenanted and promised would happen. But the path to Zion is to be found only by following God's immediate commands to us. That is how He will bring it. He will lead us there. There is no magic, there is no sprinkling fairy dust that will take you to where God is. It does not and cannot happen that way. He will lead us, teach us, command us, guide us, but we have to be the ones who become what He commands. We have to be the ones who do what he bids us do.

The greatest instruction that I know out of, given by God at any time, to any generation, is a rule of community found in the Sermon on the Mount and in the Sermon at Bountiful. Now we have the answer to the prayer for covenant, that not only resonates with the message of those two sermons but applies it directly to us in our peculiar circumstances, to fix our peculiar defects and urges us to be more like Him. The Lord revealed His plan for our day approximately 3000 years ago. We now begin fulfilling that ancient prophecy. Our current struggles were foreseen and foretold. The Lord of the whole earth considered destroying all the wicked. But His servant plead for him to grant more time (Jacob 5:49-50). The Lord of the whole earth hearkened to His servant and decreed that He would spare it and would labor within His vineyard a final time in our day (v. 51). The Lord determined long ago He would use a covenant to graft back people who had become wild and bitter and connect them to the original roots of the tree of life or in other words restore a people in our day to His covenant. The covenant offered today is from God and is the first step required to restore the family of God or tree of life on the earth. It will change the lost, wild and bitter fruit and begin to recover them and turn their hearts to the Fathers. This will connect those who are living today, with the natural roots or those Fathers who still hold rights under the original covenant (v. 52-54).

Work for this grafting began years ago and it took a great leap forward approximately two years ago with the effort to recover as near as possible the text of the Book of Mormon and Joseph Smith revelations. The initial graft happens today.

Although the Book of Mormon has remained in print continuously since its first publication in 1830, Latter Day Saints did not respect it as scripture until the 1950's. The book has been a test and not the fulsome revelation of all God's dealings even with the Nephite's. "And when they shall have received this, which is expedient that they should have first, to try their faith, and if it shall so be that they shall believe these things then shall the greater things be made manifest unto them" (3 Nephi 26:9).

From its founding until 1937, Brigham Young University did not offer a single course on the Book of Mormon. Only in 1961 did it become mandatory for incoming BYU freshmen to take a class on the Book of Mormon. Hugh Nibley defended the Book of Mormon in a debate with Sterling McMurrin in 1955. Nibley offended nearly all those who were in attendance because of his serious defense, some of whom declared flatly that the Book of Mormon needed to be abandoned because it was driving the best minds out of the church. Although Hugh Nibley advocated taking the Book of Mormon seriously in the 1950's, the Saints only began to take it seriously after Ezra Taft Benson's general conference talk in 1986. "The

church was underwhelmed with the Book of Mormon until late in the 20th century.” Noel B. Reynolds wrote about this church wide neglect in his article “The Coming Forth of the Book of Mormon in the 20th Century” found at BYU Studies, Volume 38. He wrote” The Book of Mormon was largely overlooked throughout the 19th and early 20th centuries. A handful of church leaders appealed for more serious attention to the book, however the church as a whole did not respond in any dramatic way to any of these urgent messages until after Pres. Benson's emphatic messages in 1986.” Within 18 months of the restoration through Joseph Smith, the Saints were condemned for unbelief. By January 1841 the Saints were warned they would be rejected with their dead if they failed to repent and keep God's commandments. They did not repent.

And so, the restoration has been in a pause for four and five generations waiting for God to begin it anew. Today marks a moment when the stirrings that have been underway for years result in God's offering to establish His people, on earth, by a covenant He ordains. The few ready to receive the Lord's offer today are scattered to the nethermost parts of His vineyard (v. 52). Despite this, a live broadcast on the Internet allows them to be grafted in at the same moment this is happening in Boise, Idaho. Correspondingly, those utterly refused to accept the offered covenant are plucked from the restoration's tree of life because they're bitter fruit, unable to meet the Lord's requirements. The Lord is taking the step to preserve part of humanity, not to destroy (v. 53). A few descendants of the covenant fathers have the natural gift of faith, that gift belongs to the natural branches (v. 54). When grafted we are connected to the natural roots or covenant Fathers as heirs of the promises made to them. Even after the covenant, there will still be those who are bitter and wild, who will be unable to produce natural fruit despite the covenant. These will remain for a time despite their bitterness (v. 56-57). Today only the most bitter, who refuse to be grafted in will be trimmed away.

We look forward to more nourishing or restoring of truths, lights and commandments which will bless those who receive, but for those who will not the continuing restoration will prune them away (v.58). These bitter and wild branches must still be cut off and cast away. These steps are necessary to preserve the opportunity for the natural fruit to fully return (v. 59). The good must overcome the evil, this takes time and it means that the Lord's patience is extended to give time to develop and further improve. We are not expected and cannot become natural fruit in a single step. But we are expected to accept the initial graft today. The Lord is taking the steps so that perhaps, that's a deliberate word, perhaps we may become natural fruit worthy to be preserved in the coming harvest (v.60). Perhaps is the right word. Some who are grafted will still be plucked away and burned. But others will bear natural fruit and be preserved. Accepting the covenant is not the final step. Our choices will determine whether we are bitter or natural fruit, that will decide our fate. Just as the ancient allegory foretold, the covenant makes us servants and laborers in the vineyard (v. 61) We are we are required to, this is from the covenant, “seek to recover the lost sheep remnant of this land and of Israel and no longer forsake them. Bring them to the Lord and teach them of his ways to walk in them.” If we fail to labor to recover them we break the covenant. We must labor for this last time in the Lord's vineyard. There is an approaching, final pruning of the vineyard (v.62). The first to be the first to be grafted in

are Gentiles so that the last maybe first. The lost sheep remnant next and then Israelites so that the first maybe last (v.63). But grafting is required for all, even the remnants, because God works with his people through covenant making. There will be more grafting and further pruning. As more is revealed and therefore more is required, some will find the digging and dunging too much to bear and will fall away or in other words will be pruned despite the covenant (v.64). The covenant makes it possible for natural fruit to return. The bad fruit will still continue, even among the covenant people, until there is enough strength in the healthy branches for further pruning. It requires natural fruit to appear before the final pruning takes place (v.65). The good and bad will coexist. It will damage the tree to remove the bad at once. Therefore, the Lord's patience will continue for some time yet. The rate of removing the bad is dependent wholly upon the rate of the development of the good. It is the Lord's purpose to create equality in his vineyard.

In the allegory equality in the vineyard appears three times in verses 66, 72 and 74. We cannot be greater and lesser, nor divide ourselves into a hierarchy to achieve the equal quality required for Zion. When a group is determined to remain equal and I am personally determined to be no greater than any other, then it faces challenges that never confront unequal people. A religion of bosses and minions never deals with any of the challenges of being equals. Critics claim we will never succeed because of our determined desire for equality. None of our critics can envision what the Lord has said in verses 66, 72 and 74 about his people. But equality among us is the only way prophesied for us to succeed. That does not mean we won't have a mess as we learn how to establish equality.

Similarly, Zion cannot be established by isolated and solitary figures proclaiming a testimony of Jesus from their home keyboard. The challenge of building a community must be part of a process. Zion is a community and therefore God is a god of community and his people must learn to live together with one heart, one mind, with no poor among us. Isolated keyboardists proclaiming their resentment of community can hardly speak temperately of others. How could they ever live peacefully in a community of equals? We must become precious to each other. Although the laborers in this final effort are few, you will be the means used by the Lord to complete his work in His vineyard (v.70). You're required to labor with your might to finish the Lord's work in his vineyard (v.72). But He will labor alongside you. He, not a man or a committee, will call you to do work. When He calls do not fear, but do not run faster than you have strength. We must find His people in the highways and byways and invite them to join in. Zion will include people from every part of the world. This conference is broadcast worldwide as part of the prophecy to Enoch that God would send "righteousness and truth will I cause to sweep the earth as with a flood, to gather out mine elect from the four quarters of the earth, unto a place which I shall prepare, an Holy City, that my people may gird up their loins, and be looking forth for the time of my coming; for there shall be my tabernacle, and it shall be called Zion, a New Jerusalem." (Moses 7:62)

We must proclaim this to the world. Do not despair when further pruning takes place it must be done. Only through pruning can the Lord keep his tree of life equal without those who are lofty overcoming the body (v.73). The lofty branches have always destroyed

equality to prevent Zion. The final result of the Lord's labor in His vineyard is declared by the ancient prophet in unmistakable clarity "the trees have become again the natural fruit, and they became like unto one body and the fruits were equal and the Lord of the vineyard had preserved unto himself the natural fruit which was most precious unto him from the beginning." Mark those words. That's verse 74. When the Lord explained this to me I realized how foolish it was to expect natural fruit, worthy of preservation, in an instant. The Lord works patiently, methodically and does not require any to run faster than they have strength. We cannot allow ourselves to be drawn in to inequality. When the result of this labor is to make us one body equal with one another. We cannot imitate the failures of the past by establishing a hierarchy, elevating one above another and forgetting that we must be of one heart, one mind and no poor among us.

The restoration was never intended to just restore an ancient Christian church. That is only a halfway point. It must go back further. In the words of the ancient prophet God intends to do according to his will and to preserve the natural fruit that it is good even like as it was in the beginning (v.75). This means the beginning, as in the days of Adam, with the return of the original religion and original authority, everything must be returned as it was in the beginning. Civilization began with the temple as the center of learning, law and culture. The temple was the original university because it taught of man's place with God in the universe. God will return the right of dominion once held by Adam, to man on earth to make us humble, servant, gardeners laboring to return the world to a peaceful paradise. The covenant received today restores part of that right.

There is a land inheritance given to us as part of the covenant and therefore if we keep the covenant we have the right to remain, when others will be swept away. Ultimately all rights given to us must be turned back to the Fathers who went before, who will likewise return them to Adam, who will surrender them to Christ. When Christ returns, he will come with the right to exercise complete dominion over the earth and exercise judgment over the ungodly. Things set in to motion today are part of preparing the way for the Lord's return in glory.

In the name of Jesus Christ. Amen.